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### LETTERS OF LAFAYETTE.

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[The following letters of Lafayette written in the course of the Campaign in Virginia, in 1781, are now printed for the first time, the originals being still among the manuscript collections of the Executive Department, in the Virginia State Library. We are indebted to the kindness of Hon. Joseph T. Lawless, Secretary of the Commonwealth, and Mr. W. W. Scott, State Librarian, for permission to print them.]

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Williams Burg, March the 17th, 178-.

Sir:

From a conversation with the Quarter Master of this State, I find that there will be a great deficiency of Horses, and that none of those which have been promised can leave for the purpose of our Artillery. Under these circumstances, and in the full conviction that a transportation of Heavy Artillery and stores was necessary to the Expedition, I thought that oxen might in some cases render the same service, and the Quarter Master was of opinion that the impressing of these could be more easily done.

I have therefore given to him a return of Saddle Horses, field Artillery horses, and Horse waggons, these cannot absolutely be dispensed with, and instead of the large number of draft Horses that were necessary Both for our Heavy ordinance and that of the french, I have requested him to impress 200 Oxen.

I am very unhappy, Sir, to think that my arrival in this State is accompanied with a necessity to distress its inhabitants. But your Excellency will judge that a seige operation cannot be carried without great expenses and great means of transportation. It is with the greatest reluctance that I sign any impressing warrant, but I hope my delicacy in this matter will be such as to render me worthy of the approbation of the State.

Inclosed your Excellency will find copies of letters Relatory to an affair which I am very little acquainted with. I beg leave to ask your Excellency's opinion upon the conduct I am to hold in this instance, and I would be glad to have a complete set of the militia, or other laws of this State, that I may not interfere

with the Rights of, or through ignorance, Be deficient in regard to the civil authority.

With the highest respect, I Have the honor to Be,  
Your Excellency's Most Obed. Humb. Ser.,

LAFAYETTE.

P. S.—I request your Excellency to return me the letter and copy.

To His Excellency Governor Jefferson, Richmond.

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Bowlin Green, April the 27th, 1781.

Sir:

Captain North, from Baron de Steuben's camp, has been with me last evening and was directed by the Baron to give me every intelligence Relative to our situation. From what he says I think the Baron is by this time at Chesterfield Court House, and considers Richmond as the object for both parties.

Every boat that is in the river should be collected above the falls, by which means a communication can be secured; those that are for the \* \* with the vessels, are of no use to them and will be of great service to us. I wish it was possible to fix some Heavy cannon upon small vessels so as to make floating batteries or galleys. I have lately tried the experiment at Annapolis and could derive great benefit from it.

This evening or tomorrow morning I hope to be with your excellency, and beg leave to request you will honor me with a letter that will meet me on the road and let me know how matters are.

With the highest respect I have the Honor to be your Excellency's

Most obedient & humble Servant,

LAFAYETTE.

To His Excellency Governor Jefferson.

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Lyons' Plantation, 1st July, 1781.

My dear Sir:

I had yesterday the pleasure to see Major Callis and am happy to find you have established a chain of \* \* between this camp and the seat of government. I hope my several let-

ters advising you of the enemy's retreat from Richmond, their arrival at Williamsburg, and a very close skirmish that took place some days ago, have been safely transmitted. Should the seat of government be transferred to Richmond our correspondence will be easier and public service much benefited.

By the utmost care to avoid infected grounds we have hitherto got clear of the small-pox. I wish the Harvest time might be as Easily got over but there is no keeping the militia into the field. The three brigades are so amazingly reduced that to have them of a tolerable strength I have been obliged to put them into two. They are commanded by generals Stevens and Lawson, whom I have requested to have Returns made by counties and to forward them to your excellency. Many and many men are deserting but it is near to impossibility to take them in their flight through the woods; the other day a captain of Horse was sent after a captain of foot whom he could never get hold of. They have no reason to complain, they cannot conceive any, but say they were only engaged for six weeks and the Harvest time recalls them home. On the other hand the times of a great number are daily beginning. No relief comes to them and you might as well stop the flood tide as to stop militia whose times are out. The riflemen are also determined to go and take care of their Harvest, so that I shall soon be left with the continentals.

Under these circumstances it would perhaps be better to go and fight Lord Cornwallis. But exclusive of my daily expectation of General Morgan, however disappointed I may have been as to his strength exclusive of the diminution of some I have already experienced, I confidentially will confess with you that I am terrified at the consequences of a general defeat. You are not stranger to the political State of Europe. Everything bears for the present a tolerable face. New York threatened, Carolina Re-conquered, Lord Cornwallis pushed into Williamsburg after a long Retreat. Such is the condition of affairs in America that may be laid before the mediators. But should we be beat and should the loss of Virginia follow a defeat, then obstacles will be raised again against America's independ'cy.

An order to the county lieutenants throughout the State immediately to send to the army every six month soldier, and a

call of militia to come immediately into the field are steps of an absolute necessity. I think, my dear Sir, Severe examples ought to be made of county Lieutenants who neglected to lead either the six months or their quotas of militia. Unless a large number is immediately joined to us, we must measure back the ground we have obtained over his lordship. Two Militia Brigades of 1600 each in four Regiments so as to have 1200 fit for duty, and a Rifle Brigade of the same number ought always to be kept into the field—it would be 4400 upon paper and 3600 effectives, this I would propose to be exclusive of the 6 month men, the majority of whom ought to be immediately sent and put under Continental officers. Besides this number to be with the army, the counties north of Rappahanack, the counties near Portsmouth ought to be destined, the one to the defence of the Neck and Fredericksburg; the others to have a permanent force of about three thousand men blockading Portsmouth and providing detachments from that place. Gloucester county had better be kept for its own defence. I have sent them 200 stand of arms.

Should it be possible to raise two Corps of Volunteer dragoons of 120 each, divided into two troops of sixty, mounted upon their own horses, regularly embodied under proper officers, and as accoutrements cannot be procured, armed with spears, I think they might render service. But I wish your Excellency would make a proclamation declaring that every volunteer Horse who does not belong to a Corps, the commander of which has my written orders, is not only liable to militia duty, But also will be brought to an account for the forage and provisions he may get into the country.

I beg leave to suggest to your excellency the propriety of Raising a corps of 150 Negroe pioneers to march with army, and also a corps of Hundred Negroe waggoners, they might be easily got and would afford great services.

Baron de Steüben is gone for some days to Charlottesville. I have requested him to give his assistance to the recruiting of our cavalry.

There must be a great quantity of accoutrements in the country. By a letter from the Board of war, I find that 100 saddles, 100 Swords, 100 pairs of pistols may be soon expected at

Leesburg, supposing that the same number be got in the country, as we must certainly Have collected more than 200 horses, you see that the 50 old dragoons that might be gathered in this State, and 150 new, we should mount accompanied with 50 fresh Horses for the continental dragoons we now have, may at once give us 300 Horse supporting 200 volunteer *gentlemen*, for they ought to Be men of fortune and well mounted to be immediately embodied and called into the field, your excellency will see that there may be a prospect of Becoming superior to the enemy's cavalry. But it requires great diligence, and I entreat your excellency's particular aid on that so very important point. Every horse that comes to camp I send up either to Charlottesville or Richmond, there to be subject to your orders. Impresses I beg leave to consider as a civil matter, and will receive such a number of horses from the executive as have been collected by their authority. Col. Call is going up for that same affair and to him I beg leave to Refer your excellency.

I have always the same complaint to make against the commissary department. A letter from you to them threatening the severest in case the army is left in the least want may have a great effect; I wish you will write them. I have been requested to have those punishments inflicted the first hour the army wants any kind of provisions; however these past days we have done rather better. There should be some arrangement made concerning waggons; at least every county ought immediately to send in box waggons. Then powers might be lodged with the commissary general to apply to the county lieutenants for so many waggons as are necessary to the communication between his stores and camp, with men to drive and men to keep a guard.

Promise me, my dear sir, once more to insist upon an immediate call of militia. Both brigades are not quite so large as Müllemburg's brigade has been, and with less are fit for duty. Fevers begin to spread; I have taken the liberty to call for a third of the militia of some adjacent counties; should you disapprove of it we may countermand; if not I request you will enforce my letter.

A paragraph from the executive denouncing the several punishments to Civil officers who do not immediately apprehend deserters, and ascertaining if the militia are to wait for the Re-

lieves is of an immediate necessity, for they are all going a way. Those for the light infantry and Reserve are two articles upon which I entreat your good offices.

Most Respectfully yours,

LAFAYETTE.

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Malvern Hill, 21st July, 1781.

Sir:

The Assembly of this Commonwealth, sensible of the dangers which for want of cavalry threatened this and Neighboring State, were pleased to Impower me under certain Restrictions to have such Horses and such a number of Horses impressed as I would think necessary for that Service. From motives of delicacy and tenderness for the Rights of the people, I took the liberty to request you when Brigadier general and commanding the militia to have this matter carried into execution, in hopes that your knowledge of particular persons and your zeal for the liberties of the citizens would as much as possible render the mode of impress suitable to their feelings. The same motive induced me not to meddle in this matter further than to request and wholly to let it rest with the execution, which no doubt is the properest channel.

I beg to propose that a general return be asked for of horses that have been impressed, few have been taken by my order, Some have been impressed by Major Nelson, some by the Quarter Master general in the field. Colonel White had your approbation to impress a number. Those gentlemen will be directed to send proper returns to your excellency.

As to the Employment of the said Horses that have already been attributed to the Cavalry service put in mounting field officers whom, on their embarkation, the commander in chief allowed to receive Public Horses, their own having been disposed of in the beginning of the winter, and every means of marqueting or subsisting them being refused, the general thought it best that they should be furnished with public Horses. Some other purposes too tedious to be minutely mentioned in this letter Have also obliged me to make use of impressed horses. The number is but small and has very little weight in the general state.

What is important is to know where the horses impressed by

your Excellency's or my order, have been deposited, and examine into the just causes of complaint of some inhabitants.

I apprehend many horses Have been impressed by volunteers who not only had no authority but are literally unknown to me and to your excellency. I gave the late Governor a copy of my general orders on the occasion, and requested him to have them printed and sent to the several counties.

Independent of these horses there is a great quantity of accoutrements belonging to the Continent and to the state in the several counties. The greatest abuses have been committed on this Head by volunteers. I take the liberty to request that every part of public accoutrements be ordered to Charlottesville, and in case of non obedience, coercive measures taken by the Executive.

It would also be well that in paying a due compliment to such volunteer dragoons as have been embodied in the army, your Excellency would forbid the appearance of such volunteers as refuse to acknowledge a command. I have the honor to be, with great respect,

Your most obedient Humble servant,

LAFAYETTE.

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Malbourn Hill (Va.), 29th July, 1781.

Sir:

I have been honored with your Excellency's letter of the 28th inst. It cannot be more than the wish of the Executive, than it is my wish, that no further reinforcements were necessary for the Southward. But the enemy remaining here does not lessen the necessity. Whether he continues in his present situation, commences fresh ravages in the State, we shall find that to succour General Greene is our best relief. It is a maxim with me, that the more troops we send him, the less we shall want them here. Indeed, it is one way of compelling the enemy to leave us, or at least to force him to detach, without the risque of battle. My opinion, therefore, would be, were I to address the Executive again on the same subject, rather to increase than diminish the proposed reinforcements.

But there are conclusions to be drawn from present appearances. A French naval superiority is not an impossible event.



Some accounts speak of it. The embarkation which has taken place, is most probably intended for New York. It is large enough for Potomack, and had this been its destination, it has several days had the most favorable winds. But as it seems to be compleat; its not going is a proof that it is designed for some other quarter. Admitting then, the idea of a naval superiority, the doubtfulness of its object may also call up their fears for Charlestown and this may occasion a second detachment. Under this aspect the Southern reinforcement will be of the utmost consequence.

But admitting the enemy's force to the Southward, to receive no addition, to confine it to Charlestown, must have the happiest effect. England has not scrupled to announce to every court in Europe that she is in full possession of Georgia, South Carolina and Virginia. This will be the strongest argument we can offer, short of the reduction of Charlestown, to convince them of its falsity and to give our Commissioners a proper right, should the negotiations for peace be renewed in the winter. But independant of these considerations, there are two arguments which I do not know how to answer. If we do not send the militia we may be obliged to send the Continentals, and should neither go, we shall defeat General Greene's plans and give him cause to complain of failures occasioned by our dissappointing him in promised succours.

Before I quit this subject I would beg leave to observe to your Excellency that sooner than the 2,000 militia can rendezvous at Boyd's Ferry we must have a pretty perfect explanation of the enemy's intentions. In this view and provided the call from General Greene should be less urgent than it may be here, we shall have them in readiness to join this army. And should the enemy hold only a post at Portsmouth they may give us an opportunity of acting instantly, in a case which, perhaps, may not admit of much delay, and which will also, from the necessity of different attacks, call for a still further reinforcement.

I perceive in all this the difficulty of getting arms, the length of such a march and how much averse the people may be to undertake it. But at the same time I confide in the exertions of the Executive to obviate the first, and as the advantages from sending them controbalance these evils and those which we

might experience here, should their services be wanted, I am persuaded your Excellency will not hesitate in promoting the measure in its fullest extent.

Permit me to suggest the necessity of collecting the heavy cannon of the State and such military matters as are wanted in a seige, should we be fortunate enough to be able to do anything against Portsmouth.

With the most perfect respect I have the honor to be, Sir,  
Your Excellency's most Obedient Servant,

LAFAYETTE.

His Excellency Governor Nelson.

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New Castle, August the 6th, 1781.

Sir:

However small is the number of our militia, yet there is such a scarcity of Arms in camp that those who are coming in cannot be furnished with weapons of any sort. There is I know a multiplicity of abuses on this Article owing to neglects in some militia officers, want of chests to carry the arms in, and want of a proper number of artificers to repair them. On the first point I shall repeat orders and recommand obedience; on the two others I must have recourse to your excellency and the state board of War. It is less difficult to multiply artificers than to enforce strict discipline among militia, and a necessary quantity of chests ought also to be provided. But is of immediate importance that we do speedily receive a supply of arms equal to the expected reinforcement.

We are also in want of cartridges and are to request a supply of ammunition from the state laboratory. I have done my best to prevent a waste of cartridges, but independent of neglects, the deficiency of cartridge boxes must render it difficult for the men to procure Amunition.

Give me leave, Sir, to remind your excellency of the affair of the Boats. I shall also take the liberty to express my wishes respecting the collection of cannon, Tool, and other apparatus of that kind.

It appears that Lord Cornwallis intends to fix a post at York and Gloucester, and there build fortifications. This no doubt is a new plan, the motives of which are not sufficiently explained.

My situation is not equal to the defensive, much less so to any offensive prospect, part of our militia are unarmed, and the majority of them is very inadequate to every military purpose. I am However, moving down, but in the Hope that the executive will have our Situation altered for the best.

It is I think important that the Corps under Col. Parker be speedily reinforced; the more we move from that side the more important it is to keep the enemy within Bounds, prevent their detaching to the Southward and perhaps improve opportunities. Inclosed is my letter to General Lawson, should the executive agree in opinion with me, I request they will immediately send the letter and add proper powers to it, so that there may be 4 or five hundred men there.

By letters from Philadelphia it appears the negociation between England and Holland through a Russian Mediation is broke up, and every idea of a partial peace given up for the present.

With the highest Respect, I have the honor to be, Dear Sir,  
Your Excellency's,

Most obedient and Humble Servant,

LAFAYETTE.

To his Excellency Governor Nelson.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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### TITLE TO GREENSPRING.

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[LUDWELL MSS., VIRGINIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY COLLECTIONS.]

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The following paper was drawn in defense of Colonel Ludwell's title to Greenspring that was in dispute:

15 Nov., 1618. The Treasurer and Company of Adventurers for the first Collony in Virginia being Incorporated as we suppose by grant under the broad seal of England, gave Instructions to Capt. Yeardley, their then Governor elect, that among other things, he with the Councell of State in Virginia, should with convenient speed put in Execution a former order of their courts